DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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DOCUMENTARY—THE CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF REALITY

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Speed

THE FILMS DIVISION of the Ministry of Information has shown commendable hustle in commissioning a quick-fire film called *London Can Take It*, and whisking it off to New York by clipper as soon as the first print was available. Made by the G.P.O. Film Unit in under two weeks, it presents London's citizenry and architecture under the blitzkrieg. It is good to see a first-class propaganda move of this type made by a body which has not yet completely redeemed its reputation for ineffectiveness.

Mass Observation

WE HAVE DEVOTED a number of pages in this issue to an investigation by Mass Observation of the effect of propaganda films on cinema audiences. The conclusions reached are, of course, entirely those of Mass Observation but, whether they are correct or incorrect, we believe that they raise issues of the greatest importance to everyone interested in public persuasion. The M.O. conclusions are based on films issued some weeks ago, and to put the investigations into proper perspective, we have received the following memorandum from the chief investigator:—

> "It should be pointed out that the M.O.I. has just started the second series of Five-Minute shorts and these are very definite successes. The first of these was *Front Line*. The second, *Ashley Green Goes to School*, dealt again with evacuation and was equally successful, while the third release, *Britain Can Take It* (5-minute version of *London Can Take It*) has had the most extraordinary blurbs from the Press. The response from the public has been excellent, at least as good as the response to *Britain at Bay*."

Versatility

THE PERMANENT staff of the Films Division of the M.O.I. has been selected, either from the administrative sides of the Film Industry, or from outside the film industry altogether. We believe that such a selection has been a right one, and it follows that the job of the Division is to initiate, guide and inspire production, and to organise distribution. It is therefore a little surprising to find the name of Mr. Dallas Bower, one of the Division's permanent staff, on the credit titles of *Channel Incident*, thus breaking the almost invariable custom of Civil Service anonymity. This is either an exception to be regretted, or a precedent. If the latter, the Films Division must very carefully consider whether its staff is in fact qualified to undertake the skilled and creative task of film production and whether, even if the staff be qualified, it is sound policy to undertake such work. If it decides directly to enter the field of production the Division must see that, in future, its work in this direction is at least as good, and preferably better than, any similar work done by outside professional units.

Gift Horse Technique

IS THE Films Division of the Ministry of Information aware that a number of cinemas are not running the weekly Five-Minute Films supplied to them? One diligent searcher after *Front Line* reports fourteen abortive visits without finding it running at all. This was in the week beginning October 7th, when the film should have been in all first-run cinemas. Our information is that the curtailment of running time caused by earlier closing has led managements to drop Five-Minute films before other items, chiefly on the ground that they are supplied free, and therefore their omission involves no shadow of monetary loss. What remedy the Films Division can find is a matter for investigation. But what many people would like to know is what check the Division keeps on the actual circulation of its films. If, as suggested by a contributor elsewhere in this issue, the only check is from cinema managers, there is clearly something very much wrong. It is one thing to send a copy of a film to 4,000 cinemas and quite another to get it shown. It looks as though action is needed. A good checking system could cover, not only showings, but also audience reactions.

Maurice Jaubert

ALL FILM-MAKERS will be sad to hear of the death of Maurice Jaubert, probably the most talented composer of all those specialising in music for films. Few of the big French films lacked his name on the credit titles, and there is no doubt that the qualities he added to them were an important factor in their success. He came over to England in 1937 to write the music for Cavalcanti's *We Live in Two Worlds*, and made many friends during his stay. Jaubert was in the French Army and lost his life during the blowing-up of bridges over the Meuse. We extend our sincere sympathy to his widow and daughter.

Two Important Jobs

ALEXANDER SHAW has left England in order to take up the post of Film Officer to the Indian Government. India is virgin ground as far as organised film work is concerned, and the possibilities are innumerable. The appointment has the backing of the Ministry of Information. Shaw is an admirable choice for the job. He has already worked on a number of films in the East (including *Five Faces of Malaya*) and he adds to creative ability a talent for organisation and for hard work. His energies will be sadly missed here while he is away, but everyone can be satisfied that he will fulfil what is bound to be an enormous and exacting responsibility with both vision and common sense.

* * *

J. D. DAVIDSON has been invited to join the Canadian National Film Board as director-cameraman. Davidson has been associated with the documentary movement from the beginning, joining the E.M.B. Film Unit in 1930, shortly after the completion of *Drifters*. In those days money was short and the staff was small. Since then he has made for himself a reputation of reliability second to none. In 1938 he went to Iran in charge of a six-reel documentary of the oil industry in that part of the world. He brought back the most detailed and articulate industrial film that has ever been made round a single commercial enterprise.

We wish Shaw and Davidson the best of luck. Everyone in documentary will look forward to seeing the result of their labours.

Stick in the Mud

SOME SECTIONS of the Press recently gave trenchant expression to their views on the injustice of the new Purchase Tax. There appear to be discriminations between one user and another, and between one class of goods and another. Take for example one instance which concerns those interested in education. Whereas, under class 22 (see notice by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise, No. 78) posters and plaster figures—of which statesmen, unspecified—are specially exempted from taxation, substandard films are liable to be taxed twice over. As the Act stands, raw substandard film stock has to bear a tax *before* it is made into films, which then become liable to a *second* heavy tax of six shillings and eightpence in the £. Apparently this was decided without consulting educational and other interests concerned, and probably without consideration of the effects of the tax. Although the *Sub-Standard Cinematograph Association* made approaches to the Customs and sought a treatment for films similar to that for books (exempted by Parliament on educational grounds) its case has never even been considered. Do the civil servants involved take an ordinary civil interest in such issues? Has the Customs ever heard of Education? If they had, they would recognise that the fight of educationists, film and otherwise, is a fight which affects every child and adult in the kingdom. At any rate they have effectively disguised their awareness, and have ignored the administrative obligations to consult those affected by the incidence of new taxation. Urgent representations are being made, and we hope that every teacher in the country will back them up.

FILMS AND A PEOPLE'S WAR

A discussion of the basic principles of propaganda in this war.
This article gains added significance from the release of *Britain Can Take It*, which is discussed elsewhere in this issue.

DURING the past fourteen months many have talked glibly about this being a people's war; but few have meant much more than that this war, like all wars, depends absolutely on the will, the good-will, and the capacity for suffering, of the ordinary people. True enough; but today the phrase "people's war" means something more important, something which is, to so many of our glib gentlemen, positively alarming. For the present war, if it is to be worth fighting at all, is war between two ideas, and not between two groups of nations. It is a war to decide whether the ordinary decent men and women of all countries shall have the power to live not only according to their own lights and their own standards, but also more fully and more freely. Within this thesis the national issues of the war are certainly clear cut. Nazis and Fascists are enemies of this idea. But there were plenty in Norway and France and Holland and Belgium who were equal enemies; and equally certain is it that there are plenty in Britain and the United States today who regard the good life as an acute danger to their security and their securities. Given financial and political power, such persons stick at nothing to preserve their own code —be it eighteenth-century squirearchy, nineteenth-century industrialism, or the monopolist economy of the present day.

Both in Press and Parliament the existence and danger of these real fifth columnists has been to some extent admitted, but the more insidious ideological misfits are too often forgotten. In this war active malevolence is less dangerous than the shackles of unimaginative routineers and the timidities of "intellectuals" whose ivory towers are rapidly being revealed as being constructed of cocoa-butter.

It is necessary to re-state these facts in any broad consideration of the function of films in this war—the more so since the Films Division of the M.O.I. is now finding its feet and pursuing a definite and planned policy. For behind the Five Minute films, the special films for the U.S.A., and the big non-theatrical programmes, there still exists a conflict of ideas which is as yet unresolved.

At first glance this conflict might appear to be merely that between the short-term and the long-term viewpoints. That is —the question of how to balance the immediate urgencies against the urgent permanencies. It is on short-term grounds that the value of films has already been criticised in several quarters. And although events have proved many of these criticisms to be unfounded, there is this much of truth underlying them—that the film has a special capability to provide a *long-term* vision by rendering in visual form the basic ideas and needs of a generation—be it a generation in arms, a generation in schools, or a generation in the mines and workshops of commerce. The long-term view, therefore, is of the basic ideals and the ultimate goal. The query is this:—are we in this country, or our co-equals in any other countries, too timid to focus boldly on these objects in our use of all types of media involving information, education, and propaganda?

As far as films are concerned, the seeds of this timidity (or neglect) can first be studied in some of the short-term films which have so far formed the main output during the war. There is, for instance, an instructive contrast between two recent Five Minute films—*Channel Incident* and *The Front Line*. *Channel Incident* is about the Dunkirk evacuation. *The Front Line* is about Dover in September, 1940. The former therefore has the initial disadvantage of having been made at the wrong moment. Such a film should have appeared very soon after Dunkirk, or should have been reserved till much later, when an epic event could be honoured in more peaceful retrospect. But apart from this, *Channel Incident* represents the negative of our two ideas by its insistence on the outlook of the Edwardian novelette. It is a flaming insult to the men of Dunkirk and to the men and women of the little boats, a flaming insult indeed to the British people, to reduce this great story to the terms of a middle-class female chuntering back and forth across the Channel and rescuing soldiers only incidentally while she searches for her husband. To add insult to injury, one of the crew of her motor-boat is quite gratuitously depicted as a half-wit. If ever a film symbolised the mental outlook by which Britain could lose this war, *Channel Incident* did it; and it was splendid to note the disgust, either frigid or vocal, with which it was received by many in the public cinemas.

The Front Line, on the other hand, is both truthful and decent. In a few crowded minutes it lets representative citizens of Dover tell us what they think—from the bowler-hatted Mayor standing on the promenade and saying "Dover's all right" to the housewife with her story of the electric light which turned itself on when a shell burst; from the nonchalent look-out man counting the seconds between the Calais gun-flash and the ruination of a Dover church, to the doric enthusiasm of the successful A.A. gun team. *The Front Line* is about US, and that's all right and as it should be; *Channel Incident* is about THEM, and they're a miserable section of the citizenry whose Sunday-night castigation by Priestley partly sum up what we feel about them.

It may be thought unnecessary to elaborate in so much detail on the contrast between two short-lived films. Yet the contrast is fundamental, and the resultant criticism must be applied—especially by those at the Films Division—to every film and every programme that is planned or put into production.

The Division's non-theatrical series, for instance, goes far to meet one side of the criticisms. The films are, on the whole, conceived in decency and delivered in sincerity. In the aggregate they present an inspiring picture of democracy at war. But note that it is democracy *at* war rather than democracy *through*

war. In *Welfare of the Workers*, for instance, the theme is mainly that the workers have voluntarily given up—for war purposes—the hard-won rights achieved by a century of trade unionism; and in return for this, benevolent Ministries look after their welfare. But note the pay-off—a pep-talk by Bevin on the lines of "Well, lads, we've all got to work together to get this wretched business over as soon as possible, and we're going to do it efficiently and cheerfully". Yes; quite right; impeccable sentiments. But did someone murmur, "And then what"? Just a returning to the old ways; or the construction of something better? Is this a picture of part of a great people's army or not? We receive no clue.

In fact there should be two programmes whereas at present there is only one. For if it is essential to have a clear picture of our present problems and dangers, and to indicate what is being done or what ought to be done to meet them, it is equally essential to give every citizen the chance to realise his own position, and that of his neighbours (and of his million fellows he has never met), so that the people's war can be brought to a proper conclusion by a people's army, whose organisations can only truly come from within.

There are two or three objections usually raised against this thesis. One is blatantly anti-democratic and is based on the fear that if the people have a real understanding of, and a real say in, the war, they will at once constitute a menace to investment, property, and what not. Another is that we are already so busy fighting that we have no time to delve into first principles or ultimate issues. Yet another claims that no one knows what its all about anyway—so, why worry?

In other words, there is a large number of people who are out of touch not so much with fact as with feeling; who are frightened of any clear statement of true democratic principles; who, from their own safe little paradises, will delegate responsibility upwards but never downwards; who turn at all costs to a fictional heaven rather than a factual purgatory. With obvious exceptions, this accusation may be made against a number of politicians, Whitehall-ites, public relations officers, local government officials, and Bloomsbury googies. But they do not recognise themselves in these terms because their fears and timidities are sub-conscious. Complacent in their planning for increased efficiency, they are never aware that they are completely out of touch with real people.

And, to return to films, nothing has been more striking than the timid, spineless withdrawal of officials from the few films which have been vulgar enough to talk turkey about People. With a hundred-and-one specious excuses they have endeavoured to can them. And sometimes—but by no means always—they have been successful. On the other side of the medal, they have sometimes seen their own ewe-lamb films hooted at—just because they know no better than to attempt to patronise those whose patronage they should rather be seeking on their bended knees.

It is to be hoped that one of the finest subjects for a film that ever turned up is not to go by default. The taking over of the London Tube stations was the first skirmish of the people's army. When the incompetence and lack of imagination of the authorities had failed to provide adequate air-raid shelters, the people, with great good sense (and almost alarming politeness) made their own arrangements. It was, too, significant that both police and L.T.B. staff co-operated fully with the people. The film story here is the story of the first day's march of the only army—in or out of uniform—which will win the war.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to—for instance—the personnel of the Films Division to suggest that none of them understand; for behind the chatter and the bombination one may detect the beating of real human hearts. With admirable singlemindedness the Films Division has constructed a workable machine from a collection of haphazard parts. Many of the films recently completed are not merely good in the expositional sense; they also concentrate on people as people (rather than as illustrations to a theme or as window dummies. The democratic feeling is creeping in.

The best way to carry on the work is to get in touch with the people direct. There are over forty million of them; they mean business; and they expect their employees in the Civil Service and elsewhere to provide them with the right provender in the right quantities. And a few official films articulating the people to the people would also have the salutary effect of articulating the people to the Government and the Governmental machine. Films could do an immense amount to bridge the long-criticised gap between bureaucracy and democracy. A little moral courage is all that is required. Given courage, action is easy.

BROADCAST

By SIR KENNETH CLARK, Director of Production of the Ministry of Information and lately Chief of the Films Division. Delivered as a postscript to the News on 4th October, 1940, and reprinted by courtesy of the B.B.C.

THE ORIGINAL model of democracy to which all our theories of popular Government go back was the Greek city state, where all the citizens could meet in one place, and could see what the other fellow was doing and could shout their approval or disapproval. They could feel a first-hand interest in policy because they could see the whole working of their State as well as just the little bit they had to do themselves. Now, it is obvious that when you try to apply popular government to a great complex nation instead of a single city this vital feeling of participation is largely lost. People delegate their powers without even realising that they have done so; they accept services from the state of which they are quite unaware; they

go to work day after day without having the least idea how what they are doing fits into a general pattern of the national life. Of course, there are books to tell them how their country is governed; but that isn't what they want—they want to be made to feel that they are actors in a great, thrilling drama, essential ingredients in a marvellous experiment, and this can only be done through one medium—the film.

It is now over ten years since a small band of young film directors, the chief of whom was John Grierson, recognised that the film, by giving the dramatic significance of everyday life and work, could become a great instrument of democratic education. They evolved a new type of film which they called by the rather austere name of the Documentary. Thanks to their outstanding skill the documentary has had an influence out of all proportion to its cost or its distribution. It is to their technical approach that we owe great films like *The Good Earth* or *Grapes of Wrath*, where the dramatic value of the film depends on its air of absolute truth. But, of course, the pure documentary film cannot often be shown in an ordinary cinema. People in an ordinary cinema have paid their money to be entertained, and entertainment means escape—escape above all from everyday life. But to look at documentary films one must be in quite a different frame of mind: one must want to know the truth, to understand the mysteries of a technical process, to be made conscious of one's rights and duties as a citizen. And so these films have been chiefly shown in town halls, village halls, institutions, public libraries, and similar centres of the serious minded.

Now in the past documentary films have been made and shown by all kinds of bodies—educational, commercial, technical; but to-day the Government, through the Ministry of Information, is undertaking the showing of such films on a scale never attempted before. We are sending round seventy-six mobile film units which can be set up in country districts. We are lending fifty projectors to local organisations, and we are arranging hundreds of shows in cinemas out of normal hours. Altogether we shall be giving at least a thousand shows a week.

Some of the films shown will come from the film library at the Imperial Institute; but the majority will be made by the best of the younger film directors specially to suit the times, and will deal with all those war-time services and activities which the Government is organising; and all the hundreds of ways in which people are working for their country. They will show the worker how his health is being cared for under the new conditions of war, and how he can change from one job to another in order to make the best use of his skill. They will show a village school where a teacher is coping with all the new problems created by evacuation. Or they will show the making of an aeroplane propeller, where the utmost refinements of measurement produce every day works of art as carefully calculated as a Greek temple. That is something worth remembeing when we read in the newspapers accusations of muddle and inefficiency.

I have said that films of this kind don't compete with the ordinary cinema. We shan't show pure entertainment films on our circuit. But we shan't be limited to mere instruction. We shall include films like *Men of the Lightship*, which record great feats of heroism, or some of our five-minute films like *Miss Grant Goes to the Door*, which help people to remember Government messages by putting them in a dramatic form. And in this way I think we shall do something to meet that most pressing problem—the deadly boredom which threatens a great section of the country during the coming winter. Other organisations will supply amusement: but the trouble about boredom is that it can't be relieved by amusement alone—as anyone with children knows. The mind has to be seriously occupied, to be extended, as it were, for a short time every day. And how can it be better occupied than in getting to understand the vast complicated structure of which we are a part, and for which we are in part responsible.

5-MINUTE FILMS FOR SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

Title	Theme	Director	Production Unit	Released
YESTERDAY'S OVER YOUR SHOULDER	Engineering Training	Thorold Dickinson	D. & P. Studios	9/9/40
MISS KNOW-ALL	Gossip	Graham Cutts	D. & P. Studios	16/9/40
CHANNEL INCIDENT	Dunkirk	Anthony Asquith	D. & P. Studios	23/9/40
THE FRONT LINE	Dover	Harry Watt	G.P.O.	7/10/40
***ASHLEY GREEN GOES TO SCHOOL**	School Services in War-time	John Eldridge	Strand	14/10/40
†BRITAIN CAN TAKE IT	Blitzkrieg on London	Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings	G.P.O.	21/10/40

* *Shortened version of the non-theatrical film* **Village School**, *reviewed in our last issue.* † *Adapted from* **London Can Take It**, *reviewed in this issue*

FILM OF THE MONTH

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT. *Producer:* Walter Wanger. *Director:* Alfred Hitchcock. *Cast:* Joel Macrea, Laraine Day, Herbert Marshall, Albert Basserman, George Sanders, Edmund Gwenn, Eduardo Cianelli, and Robert Benchley.

IN HIS LONG career in British Studios all Hitchcock's best films were thrillers (*The Lodger*, *Blackmail*, *Murder*, *Secret Agent*, *Sabotage*, *The Lady Vanishes*), while his least successful efforts were films such as *Rich and Strange*, *The Skin Game*, *Jamaica Inn*, and so on. Many critics used to say what a shame it was that Hitchcock's enormous directorial talent never seemed to click with the treatment of serious themes; though they should perhaps have been content to enjoy the aforementioned thrillers for what they were—exciting stories treated in an original and stimulating way. For after all, whether you like thrillers or not, Hitchcock has a genius for film making, and the British film industry has never been overcrowded with genius.

Then Hitchcock went to Hollywood and it would seem that the wider resources and the more deeply established traditions of Hollywood have given him new powers. Apart from better script departments and wider studio facilities, however, it is probable that what has really happened is that Hitchcock has at last got what he never had here—a proper producer. In *Rebecca* (producer: ~~Zanuck~~ Selznick) he did bring off a non-thriller subject; the imaginative qualities of several sequences—especially that which opened the film—were something which the previous Hitchcock films had never more than hinted at.

In *Foreign Correspondent* we have Hitchcock working with Walter Wanger; and Wanger is known as Hollywood's most alert and liberal-minded producer. The result is a thriller which, as a thriller, is the best that Hitchcock has ever done and which, for various reasons, is at moments something very much more than a thriller. The main reason, one may guess, is that Wanger saw in the war set-up the possibility of linking the thrill-story—usually an artificial concoction—to an all-time actual sensation like the European conflict. That is, he saw the chance of placing Hitchcock's superb shocker technique over against something which was not only a shocker but also hideously real. Hitchcock saw the chance and took it.

The story tells of a young American journalist (Joel Macrae) who is sent to Europe in 1939 to be in on the crisis. He duly gets entangled in a series of terrific adventures, involving one Fischer (Herbert Marshall), who runs a Peace Society as a cover for Fifth Column activities; his daughter (Laraine Day); and a Dutch statesman named van Meer (Albert Basserman) who is kidnapped, and the search for whom takes up much of the film. Highlights of the film include an assassination in the rain at The Hague, with the murderer's departure marked only by disturbed ripples on a great sea of umbrellas; a superb suspense sequence in a windmill; Macrae's narrow escape from being pushed off the tower of Westminster Cathedral by a hired assassin (Edmund Gwenn); a cleverly observed Peace Lunch at the Savoy; a torture scene in an upper room in Charlotte Street; a comedy sequence in a Cambridge Hotel; and a flying-boat crash in mid-Atlantic.

It is great fun to find Herbert Marshall and Edmund Gwenn cast as villains; and they team up well with Cianelli, who has been doing screen scoundrels for years. Robert Benchley is admirable as a boozing London correspondent off the booze, and there is also a charming sketch by another actor (whose name escapes me) of a madly beaming and bewildered Latvian diplomat. And Hitchcock himself contributes a massive and Epstein-like study of "Man Reading Paper on Sidewalk". But the best acting comes from Albert Basserman and George Sanders.

Throughout most of the film the close-packed incidents are given added urgency by the imminent presence of war, and the last part of the film takes place after war has begun. The trans-atlantic flying boat (complete with hero, heroine, friends and villains) is shot down by a Nazi warship. The nose-dive and crash is terrifically exciting—chiefly because it is all shot from within the flying boat, and as a result the audience can take part in the authentic and actual terror of aerial disaster.

There remains for consideration the propagandist element of the film; for, quite apart from the atmosphere of real urgency already referred to, there are two points at least where direct statements of idea are made. The first is when Van Meer, under third degree in a Charlotte Street attic, recognises through the aching glare of the lights, his friend Fischer—revealed now as a traitor to the cause of peace. Speaking slowly and under great physical stress (Basserman is superb here) he identifies this single Fifth Columnist with all traitors to humanity everywhere, with those financiers and politicians and autocrats and industrialists who—cynically or stupidly (it doesn't matter which)—engineer death and misery for the peoples of the world. The speech is very strong meat indeed, and Hitchcock, presumably, only gets away with it because of its melodramatic context.

The second piece of propaganda is the final sequence, which depicts Macrae broadcasting to the States during an air-raid on London, with the lights fading out as he makes an impassioned plea to Americans to keep their own lights shining and to take action before it is too late. This sequence must certainly have been shot before the aerial blitzkrieg on Britain started, and one notices that it could be detached from the film and still leave a suitable finale. The actual event of the raid, with its falsetto sirens and somewhat unseemly B.B.C. panic can, therefore, be forgiven its inaccuracies of fact and of atmosphere. The importance of the sequence is that it is a message to the States—and not to us—sent out by an American journalist and, in fact, conceived at script conferences at which Walter Wanger had the last word. It is neither a warlike nor a political piece of propaganda; it stimulates thought, and its message should strike home on the other side of the Atlantic; to us over here it does at least bring evidence of a goodwill backed by clear thinking.

LONDON CAN TAKE IT!

Being the commentary of the film of that name reviewed on page 14 of this issue, Commentator: Quentin Reynolds, War Correspondent, *Collier's Weekly*. Reproduced by permission of the Ministry of Information Films Division and the G.P.O. Film Unit.

I AM SPEAKING from London. It is late afternoon and the people of London are preparing for the night. Everyone is anxious to get home before darkness falls—before our nightly visitors arrive. This is the London rush hour.

Many of the people at whom you are looking now are members of the greatest civilian army ever to be assembled. These men and women who have worked all day in offices or in markets, are now hurrying home to change into the uniform of their particular service.

The dusk is deepening. Listening crews are posted all the way from the coast to London to pick up the drone of the German planes. Soon the nightly battle of London will be on. This has been a quiet day for us; but it won't be a quiet night. We haven't had a quiet night for more than five weeks. They'll be over to-night and they'll destroy a few buildings and kill a few people. Probably some of the people you are watching now.

Now they're going into the public shelters. This is not a pleasant way to spend the night, but the people accept it as their part in the defence of London. These civilians are good soldiers,

Now it's eight o'clock. Jerry's a little bit late to-night. The searchlights are in position. The guns are ready. The People's Army of volunteers is ready. They are the ones who are really fighting this war. The firemen, the air-raid wardens, the ambulance drivers. And there's the wail of the banshee . . .

The nightly siege of London has begun. The city is dressed for battle. Here they come. Now

the searchlights are poking long, white inquisitive fingers into the blackness of the night. These are not Hollywood sound effects. This is the music they play every night in London—the symphony of war.

That was a bomb.

The very young and the very old, with that deep wisdom given only to the very young and the very old, sleep in the shelters. Do you see any signs of fear on these faces?

Now the army of the people swings into action. The bombs have started fires. When a bomber starts a fire he immediately returns, uses it as a target and drops more bombs, hoping to spread the fire. Yet the People's Army ignores the bombs and the spent shrapnel, which rains down consistently. Brokers, clerks, pedlars, merchants by day—they are heroes by night.

The night is long. But sooner or later the dawn will come. The German bombers are creatures of the night. They melt away before the dawn and scurry back to the safety of their own aerodromes.

* * * *

And there's the wail of the banshee again—this time a friendly wail . . . The "All Clear" signal tells us that the bombers have gone. It's just 6 a.m. In this last hour of precious sleep, this strange new world finds peace.

London raises her head, shakes the debris of the night from her hair and takes stock of the damage done. London has been hurt during the night. The sign of a great fighter in the ring is: "Can he get up from the floor after being knocked down?" London does this every morning.

London doesn't look down upon the ruins of its houses, upon those made homeless during the night, upon the remains of churches, hospitals, workers' flats. London looks upwards towards the dawn and faces the new day with calmness and confidence.

The People's Army go to work as they did in that other comfortable world, which came to an end when the invader began to attack the last stronghold of freedom. Not all the services run as they did yesterday, but London manages to get to work on time—one way or another. In the centre of the city the shops are open as usual—in fact many of them are more open than usual.

Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels said recently that the nightly air raids have had a terrific effect upon the morale of the people of London. The good doctor is absolutely right. To-day the morale of the people is higher than ever before. They are fused together, not by fear, but by a surging spirit of courage the like of which the world has never known. They know that thousands of them will die. But they would rather stand up and face death than kneel down and face the kind of existence the conqueror would impose on them.

And they know, too, and are comforted by the thought that England is not taking its beating lying down. They are guarding the frontiers of freedom. It is hard to see five centuries of labour destroyed in five seconds. But London is fighting back.

I am a neutral reporter, I have watched the people of London live and die ever since death in its most ghastly garb began to come here as a nightly visitor five weeks ago. I have watched them stand by their homes. I have seen them made homeless. I have seen them move to new homes. And I can assure you that there is no panic, no fear, no despair in London town; there is nothing but determination, confidence and high courage among the people of Churchill's island.

And they know that every night the R.A.F. bombers fly deep into the heart of Germany, bombing munition works, aeroplane factories, canals; cutting the arteries which keep the heart of Germany alive.

It is true that the Nazis will be over again tomorrow night and the night after that and every night. They will drop thousands of bombs and they'll destroy hundreds of buildings and they'll kill thousands of people. But a bomb has its limitations. It can only destroy buildings and kill people. It cannot kill the unconquerable spirit and courage of the people of London.

London can take it!

CORRESPONDENCE

This is an extract from a letter from a Japanese documentary director sent privately to a documentary director in England. It is delightful to receive such a letter from the other side of the world, and the writer has paid the British documentary movement a great compliment in sending it. We wish him good luck in his endeavours.

I am a budding director of a member of the Documentary Film Department of the Tokio Film Co. Now, we must study many things about it, although its grow very speedy in Japan. Recently, I see several documentary film of your country, that imported through British Embassy. It's splendid! I envy it. There are very nice editing and fine cutting. England has old history and new angle of it. I think I must studying it from England.

Unfortunately, your country is in the midst of the war. But there is no nationality in art.

Please lead me to good director of cinema. And I am sorry to trouble you so much, but please introduce me good reference book or new essay about documentary film for earnest student in Japan.

SIR: I have just seen the documentary film *Ashley Green Goes to School*,* and as a schoolteacher with seven months' experience of evacuation I would like to express my appreciation of the tribute the film pays to the public-spirited and self-sacrificing work of the teachers. I cannot help but feel, however, that the film gives a false impression to the general public of the real state of affairs. For example, it presents the life of the evacuated teacher and scholar as one of unmitigated pleasure and profit. On the contrary, the reality is far different.

My experience, shared by most of my colleagues, is that our work under conditions of evacuation, far from proving fruitful, leaves us with a sense of frustration and wasted effort. The film showed only the best working conditions and suggested nothing of the difficulties of working in make-shift rooms, church halls, several classes in one room, dreary walks to fill up time, lack of books and other necessary materials. Under the conditions I mention—and conditions which approximate more to the real state of affairs than the film would suggest—it is not possible to give the children that undivided attention necessary to their education. The home life of the children in the evacuated areas also left very much to be desired. It was these factors—unhappy home life and a school life with a very much lower standard of education than is normally given in our schools—which led to the wholesale return to the dangers of city life in war-time. I feel that more emphasis should have been placed in the film, on the difficulties I have mentioned but, nevertheless, desire to express appreciation once again of the film as a whole.

MARY G. EPSTEIN

London, N.W.3.

* *The Five-Minute theatrical version of* **Village School** *reviewed in D.N.L. for October.*—ED.

DOCUMENTARY AND OTHER BOOKINGS FOR NOVEMBER

(The following bookings for November are selected from a list covering its Members, supplied by The News and Specialised Theatres Association.)

	Week ending
A Failure at Fifty	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	30th
News Theatre, Leeds	9th
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	23rd
A Midsummer Day's Work (G.P.O.).	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	2nd
After Midnight	
News Theatre, Leeds	30th
Alice in Switzerland	
Tatler, Manchester	2nd
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	23rd
Animal Geography	
The News House, Nottingham	9th
Bowling Skill	
The News House, Nottingham	9th
Broken Blossoms	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	16th
Creatures Great and Small	
News Theatre, Leeds	16th
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	9th
Black-Out Time	
News Theatre, Aberdeen	9th
Britain's Life Line	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	16th

	Week ending
Cross Roads of the Orient	
The News House, Nottingham	30th
Detour in America	
Tatler, Manchester	9th
Dismissed	
Tatler, Manchester	2nd
The News House, Nottingham	16th
Doing a Dick-eyed Walk	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Fear and Peter Brown	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Father of the Family	
The News House, Nottingham	23rd
Fitness Wins, No. 8	
News Theatre, Leeds	23rd
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd
Fitness Wins the Game	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	30th
Forty Million People	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	16th
Four Thousand Years	
News Theatre, Leeds	16th
Freaks of the Deep	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	23rd
From Fur to Hand	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	30th
Glass	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	9th
Going Places, No. 75	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	16th
Going Places, No. 77	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	30th
Going Places	
The News House, Nottingham	23rd
Happy Tots Expedition	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Hawaiian Holiday	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	9th
High Peril	
News Theatre, Leeds	30th
Tatler, Manchester	30th
Hills of Smiling Death	
The News House, Nottingham	30th
How to Eat	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd
Insect Oddities	
The News House, Nottingham	30th
Invisible Power	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	9th
Isles of the East	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	30th
Just Kids	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	16th
Last of the Windjammers	
News Theatre, Leeds	2nd
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd
March of Time No. 4 (The U.S. Navy)	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	2nd
March of Time No. 5 (Gateway to Panama)	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	30th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	16th
The News House, Nottingham	23rd
Mamele	
Tatler Theatre, Leeds	23rd
Tatler Theatre, Leeds	30th
Me and My Pal	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	16th
Medical Miracles	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	30th
Mediterranean Blues	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	23rd
Me Feelin's is Hurt	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	23rd
Men of Africa	
News Theatre, Leeds	9th
Tatler, Manchester	23rd
Michael Flagherty	
Tatler Theatre, Manchester	30th
Moments of Charm	
The News House, Nottingham	16th
My Friend the Dog	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	23rd
Net Result	
The News House, Nottingham	16th
New Audioscopics	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	30th
Nomad in the North	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	23rd
Northern Outpost	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	9th
Nostradamus	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	9th
Pewter	
Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	9th
Playtime at the Zoo	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	16th
Pluto's Quinpuplets	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	30th
Poetry of Nature	
News Theatre, Newcastle	23rd
Practical Pig	
News Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Q Planes	
Tatler Theatre, Chester	2nd
Radio Hams	
News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	30th
Riding the Crest	
The News House, Nottingham	30th
Roofs of the World	
News Theatre, Leeds	30th

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OPEN LETTER
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FILM INTERESTS

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FILM SOCIETY NEWS

FILM SCHOOL

The Workers Film Association is to be congratulated on its enterprise in running a week-end film school at St. Albans during a blitz-October. The School was organised in conjunction with the Association of Cine-Technicians, and the announced programme was as follows:—

"*The Use and Purpose of the* 16 *mm. film by democratic bodies*"—its scope among Trade Unions, Labour and Co-operative organisations in child and adult education—the means of entertainment and historical record—how to select and arrange a programme of films—preparing a balanced programme—advertising—the selection of hall—police regulations—presentation, including correct spooling and gramophone accompaniments.

Lecturer: ALDERMAN JOSEPH REEVES, Hon. Secretary and Manager, W.F.A.

Chairman: P. NOEL BAKER, M.P.

FILM DISPLAY, *Voice of the People* and *People with a Purpose*.

"*The Film and Technical Education.*" The lecturer gave particulars of films available and shewed how they can be used in a pre-arranged sequence.

Lecturer: OLIVER BELL, Secretary of the British Film Institute.

Chairman: W. H. GREEN, M.P.

"*Films and Propaganda.*" The place of films in the propaganda of the Trade Union, Labour and Co-operative Movements. Should films be used for political propaganda? How the British Board of Film Censors operates. Censorship and the 16 mm. film.

Lecturer: GEORGE H. ELVIN, Secretary of the Association of Cine Technicians.

Chairman: ELLEN WILKINSON, M,P.

Mr Elvin's speech included the following points:

There is a misguided impression amongst large sections of the film trade that the public will not tolerate propaganda on the screen. I don't believe it, any more than that the public would boycott propaganda literature and drama. Today we are finding that propaganda films are box office winners and for the rest of the war, whether we like it or not, we are going to have politics and propaganda on the screen.

The Nazis appear to realise the importance of films and have film vans travelling to the remotest villages of the Reich. The Ministry of Information too is struggling hard to realise it, but there is one important difference between showing films in Germany and in this country. Germany can force the population to see them. We have to show such films as will attract the public. That is, however, a sign of strength and not of weakness. It will make for better films.

In the same way as the Trade Union, Labour and Co-operative Movements have their own press, and in many countries their own wireless, theatre and drama groups, so they should also have their own cinema. Their purpose should mainly be to work in the sub-standard field where they can operate in and through their own members. But they should not overlook the commercial cinemas. If any section of the population has a story to tell, it is the working-class movement. If neither the Government nor the commercial cinema will produce such films, then the Trade Unions should.

The British Board of Film Censors, as is instanced by its action, has no rational basis and is dictated largely by outworn social class and political conventions. On the sub-standard side, there is no censorship other than the voluntary wartime security censorship. There has until recently been a growing agitation for the regulation and control over the exhibition of such films. The report of last year's Home Office inquiry came down heavily on the side of the sub-standard users and was a snub for the British Board of Film Censors, who were strongly in favour of their censorship control being extended to sub-standard films.

If the film is to continue to progress, we must do away with the constant restriction imposed by people most concerned with holding to the social, political and moral ideals of their grandparents. The elimination of every controversial subject will deprive the cinema of playing any useful part in the life of the nation. The power, the creative ability and not least, the box-office pull of members of the Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative Movements, can ensure that the cinema is not a drug but a stimulant in the life of the people.

Film Show of 16 *mm. Films*. Included in the films shown were:—

(1) **Advance Democracy** (made for the five London Co-operative Societies).
(2) **The Builders** (made by the Workers Film Association for the Amalgamated Society of Building Trade Workers).
(3) **Millions of Us** (a Trade Union propaganda film made by Hollywood film trade unionists).
(4) **Behind the Guns** (one of the recent Ministry of Information films).
(5) **Story of a New Oil** (a short scientific film).

"*The Function of the Standard and sub-Standard Film.*" Lecturer: THOROLD DICKINSON (film director of *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery* and *Gaslight*, who made films in Spain during the Civil War and is now making films for the Ministry of Information) lectured on some of these experiences and the general function of films in wartime as envisaged by a leading film technician and film trade unionist.

Chairman: T. O'BRIEN, Secretary, National Association Theatrical and Cine Employees.

NEWS FROM THE SOCIETIES

Dundee and St. Andrews opened their autumn season on October 13th with a programme which included Joris Ivens' *The 400,000,000* Alex Shaw's *Men of Africa*, and the French feature film *Le Roi S'Amuse*. The second performance of the season had as feature *Fredlos*.

This Society send the gratifying news that their membership for the season is already nearly 600 (a record for the Society) and is still rising. So much for the cultural blackout!

It is now reported that **Aberdeen** plans to give their normal season of at least six performances.

Belfast plans to open its season this month in spite of many difficulties, including lack of a cinema, transport delays and increased costs. The subscription has been raised by sixpence. Among films which it is hoped to show are *Quai des Brumes*, *Les Neuf Célibataires*, *Hotel du Nord*, *Five Faces of Malaya*, *Dark Rapture*, and *Death Day*.

The **Edinburgh Film Guild** announces:—

"In this second year of war, when the peoples of the world are being increasingly separated from each other, the need for the Guild's performances is even more important. It has therefore been decided to arrange a half season of five shows before Christmas, and if circumstances permit a second half-season will be arranged after Christmas.

"Despite the difficulty of getting new publications from the Continent, there are still sufficient foreign films in this country to maintain the international character of the programme. Indeed, it is hoped to go a step further, and arrange several entire programmes each devoted solely to the work of one country."

Shows will be held in the Caley Picture House, Lothian Road, on Nov. 3, Nov. 17, Dec. 1, and Dec. 15. They will commence at 2.15, and are planned to finish before dark.

The first programme on October 20th had *Remontons les Champs Elysées* as feature. On November 3rd a programme of American films is being given, probably with Kanin's *A Man to Remember* as the main feature. Other films to be shown at later sessions include *La Femme du Boulanger*, *La Marseillaise* (an especially good Film Society choice), *Fall of a Tyrant*, and *Dood Wasser*. The Guild is also arranging a special showing of the prize-winning films of the Scottish Amateur Film Festival.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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SOCIAL RESEARCH AND THE FILM

By TOM HARRISSON, pioneer of Mass Observation in this country. As with other signed articles, publication does not necessarily indicate that it reflects the views of D.N.L. The article was written before the issue of such films as *The Front Line* and *Britain Can Take It*, discussed elsewhere in this issue.

IN RECENT numbers of DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER there have been numerous references to the apparently *ad hoc* policy for Ministry of Information films, and several references to the apparent failure of the Films Division to check up on what it is doing. Moreover, recently the Select Committee on National Expenditure stressed the need for the Films Division to consult the Home Intelligence Division of the Ministry on the sort of films and treatment needed, *before* embarking on the making of propaganda films. It is clear that the short-term function of the Films Division is to affect public opinion. The *only* test of its value is, therefore, the *effect* of its films on the people who see them; the only justification of its output, a demonstrable need for every film. The Films Division has the immense responsibility of producing films with effects favourable to the continuation of the war and our victory. These films may either have a general effect on temper, temperament, determination, etc., or deal with specific subjects.

It is therefore interesting to find that the Films Division of the Ministry appears to have no adequate machinery to provide it with much evidence, either by observation, interpretation or questionnaire, on the influence its films have had and are having. Apparently the only substantial data available to the Division are reports from cinema managers.

It is not worth elaborating for readers of this publication the difficulties which would face any cinema manager who, while carrying on his ordinary jobs, attempted without training to observe the reactions to specific points, including the sequences of short films, sandwiched in full-length programmes. And it is the detailed breakdown which is so important in checking on propaganda. A small incident in a film may produce unforeseen effects. For instance, *Miss Grant goes to the Door* (best liked of M.O.I. shorts), apart from terrifying some rural spinsters and widows, was incidental propaganda for a "people's war". The whole solution of her problem depended on her getting a revolver (from the fortunately placed corpse). The sight of this untrained hand wielding the weapon, however ineffectively, at once played on the secret wish to have some weapon of protection in times like this. Trivial examples of this sort can be multiplied. And it is really amazing that any informed propaganda unit can have produced for *general* distribution a film like *Call to Arms*, which was calculated to alienate many sorts of working-class or other feelings. The Films Division with its highly intelligent personnel, in its very high building, tends to be easily out of touch with the rather simpler reactions of industrial Lancashire and rural Somerset. One of the reasons why Social Research has come into being is because, under modern economic and administrative conditions, it is difficult for any "high-ups" to keep in close or sympathetic touch with "low-downs".

But if the Films Division of the M.O.I. needs social research, the whole film industry needs such machinery at least as badly. For in wartime, war becomes by far the most important item in our lives, and the subject of many feature films. The effect of these films, extensive and expensive as they often are, may often prove greater, if less direct, than short or five-minute documentaries. *The Lion Has Wings* was, for instance, a powerful contribution towards Chamberlainish complacency; *Let George Do It*, a detailed analysis of enemy espionage, has given rise to persistent and sometimes hysterical rumours that broadcasters, ranging from Vic Oliver and Charlie Kunz to Edward Ward and C. B. Cochran, have been arrested (interned, shot, hung) for sending out code messages over the radio.

So much for the general considerations. I am suggesting with diffidence that the Films Division is operating in a vacuum at present. Can it *prove* that it is not doing more harm than good? I am also suggesting that the commercial film industry and the independent documentary concerns must consider and accurately measure the effect of their films, not only in the terms of æsthetics, box office and techni-colour, but also in terms of morale, behaviour and social conduct.

* * * *

Having, I hope, broadly stated the case for research on film effects, film people will ask what sort of potential machinery exists for checking, and how accurate is it? Here I must ask that my answer be treated with the utmost caution. I am heavily biased, because for some three years now part of the energies of Mass Observation have been directed to studying film effects. And as I can find exceedingly little other definite British research on this subject, except for occasional local questionnaires, and Sydney Bernstein's annual popularity polls, I am forced to start out rather from our own experience. I should mention that *we* are already adequately employed!

The only thorough film research ever undertaken was sponsored by the Payne Fund, through the Motion Picture Research Council, in the U.S.A., 1929–32. Many of the best sociologists and social psychologists in America took

some part in producing the twelve volumes of research results. But these were concerned exclusively with children, and there is nowhere adult data for comparison. The method used in the survey was almost entirely that of direct questionnaires to children, probing hundreds of problems, such as the most popular film scene, film attendances, the effect on conduct and emotional life, relation of films and crime. It was found that, sometimes, even a single picture had the effect of altering children's attitudes, e.g., *Birth of a Nation* caused antagonism towards negroes; *All Quiet on the Western Front*, objection to war. A high proportion (66 per cent) of children imitated their favourite film stars in emotional and sexual circumstances. Children who went frequently to the cinema were found to be less favourably disposed to school, home and other normal environments than those who went only occasionally. In brief, it was established that the film exerted an immense influence on American children.

From these investigations it has generally been assumed that the effect on adults is similarly immense. *But no scientific evidence on this subject exists.* In a small way, Mass Observation has attempted to assess the influence of the film on several occasions. While we would not, under any circumstances, claim a general validity for our results, several different studies, separate in time, place, subject and method, have given pretty similar results. For instance, in March, 1939, we made a study of one thousand voluntary A.R.P. wardens in a typical borough, and among other things sought to discover what propaganda had influenced them to join A.R.P. In their view, the following was the relative importance of the different propaganda channels in determining their attitude to A.R.P.:—

	per cent
Press	26
Talk and friends	24
Posters and displays	19
Radio	11
Leaflets, pamphlets and books	10
Meetings	3
Films	1
Miscellaneous	6

Shortly after the declaration of war, we asked our nation-wide panel of voluntary observers (*not* a typical cross-section of Britain) to ballot on what they considered the main influence in determining their general attitude to the war and their understanding of the events leading up to it, with the following result:—

	in importance
Friends and "own opinion"	1st
Press	2nd
Radio	3rd
Leaflets, pamphlets, etc.	4th
Posters and displays	5th
Films	6th

The numerous subtle *indirect* impacts of the film probably add up to an important total; in a fashion survey a couple of years ago we found Joan Crawford was fourth most important factor in determining the headwear of Cockney and Lancashire girls. But the *direct* effect of films, specifically presented as propaganda or with the object of producing an immediate effect, would seem to be small when compared with the generalisations often made by interested parties. Further research into this subject is clearly of importance.

It is easier to make continuous studies of newsreels than of documentary films, and we have watched what we believe to be a pretty steady decline in the prestige, never high, of newsreels, in the past year. At the end of 1939 just under two-thirds of all persons asked said they liked newsreels, and expressed sentiments distinctly favourable to them; by August, 1940, only just a quarter of those questioned held this point of view. In 1939, 12 per cent spontaneously criticised newsreels for having no news; in 1940, 35 per cent spontaneously made this criticism. These results have no *absolute* validity, but a comparative value.

The investigators, the question, the areas and class proportions were the same each time; and the questioning was spread over several weeks in order to avoid the dominant influence of any one newsreel. A whole wealth of criticism was revealed, some of it very unfair to the Newsreel Companies. At the same time, we have found repeated cases where the newsreels have alienated people by their political bias, by their treatment of emotional topics, by the commentaries (which are often unsympathetic to ordinary people), and have shown by numerous indications that they are sometimes out of touch with the feeling of the moment and even, sometimes, with the permanent feelings of housewives or labourers.

A newsreel at the beginning of the present blitz preceded pictures of bombed London (presented in a manner hardly calculated to elevate the provinces) with:

Britain's Day of Prayer.
More Canadian troops arrive.
"Dead" Guards V.C. is prisoner-of-war.
New Zealand band plays popular airs for London.
U.S. ambulances for Great Britain.
Duchess of Kent visits a hospital.

The prestige of newsreels seems to have fallen most sharply among middle-class people and among men; there is some parallel evidence that the prestige of Ministry shorts has not risen lately, and that they are more appreciated among the middle-classes than among the working classes (the greater part of the population). Incidentally, people who see favourable reviews of Ministry shorts often find difficulty in locating the cinemas where they are showing, and our own investigators have wasted much time and energy in this way.

So far we have been dealing mainly with verbal responses, *public* opinion. If we are to understand fundamental attitudes, to the film or anything else, we must penetrate below the superficial words. The film, in its environment, the cinema, offers almost ideal material for the student of *private* opinion. The large numbers of people provide adequate quantities of types, of all classes, ages and sexes. The darkness provides the privacy in which people can react as individuals and even perhaps hiss a Minister they would only dare glare at in the flesh. Moreover, films provide an immense range of human situation, and present to the audience a great variety of emotional problems.

Watching audience responses in cinemas gives the same sort of information about what is really going on in people's minds as we get from intimate war diaries, or dream studies. For instance, while public opinion polls and press letterbags showed a heavy increase in Chamberlain's popularity after the beginning of the war, and while this popularity was superficially maintained until within a few days of his resignation, newsreel observation showed a steady and accelerating decline in favourable audience response whenever he appeared on the screen, though it is the "done thing" to be loyal to your Prime Minister in public, especially in wartime. Similarly, direct opinion testing would always show a big hand for the King. But in the early months of the war newsreel (and other) studies showed that his popularity was at a low ebb.

Since the bombing of Buckingham Palace the King's popularity has risen, as instanced by one-seventh of appearances applauded at the outbreak of war to over one-third of appearances applauded since the blitz. The Duke of Windsor, who is not often seen, has the highest score of all, maintained throughout the war. Before the Dakar incident General de Gaulle had a 100 per cent favourable response and, in more than half of our observations, was clapped for over five seconds; mass-observers await with interest his next newsreel appearance.

Clearly, much depends on the methods of measuring audience response. We have devoted a good deal of effort to developing an accurate measure; but as well as being accurate, it must also be practicable under the special conditions for observation, which are far from a laboratory. Observer variation, the rapid sequence of film events, the difficulty of getting scripts as a check on observation, and the darkness in which the observer must write and record, are all difficulties. We have tended, therefore, to observe a few films in detail, rather than many films in brief.

Six main types of audience response are observed, each response graded into categories according to the approximate extent of response amongst the audience, and the duration is stated in seconds. Testing with different investigators has shown that this method provides information which is reasonably reliable for practical purposes. In studying *Let George Do It*, for instance, with six investigators working separately, recording audience response to fifty sequences in the film, the degree of consistency was striking. Moreover, in this as in many other investigations, we found a striking similarity in the responses of widely different audiences.

The emotional background for laughter seems, on our detailed studies of films, music hall and pantomime, to be remarkably stable, but the *detail* of treatment for successful jokes on familiar themes is very changeable, especially under contemporary conditions. The living stage comedian is immediately sensitive to this and can modify his jokes accordingly from evening to evening. The film comedian, or the documentary film producer who wants to make the point

with a touch of humour, is at a disadvantage here in having less contact with public opinion, and therefore more need for a well based understanding of probable trends. To refer once more to *Let George Do It*, the "topical" jokes in that film were not popular and received little more than half the volume of response given to non-topical jokes in the same sequences. The conditions for their particular topicality had changed while the film was being made and distributed. We have made five separate investigations into joke reactions, in Blackpool, in London music halls, in a last Christmas pantomime, in a Sunday newspaper competition and in Formby films. In every case, much over half of the successful laughter points came from themes of ill-health, deformity, sexual abnormality, or potential death (including war) situations. This was as true of Blackpool in 1937 as of a music hall in 1940. Even in 1937, in Blackpool, war was running only a little behind ill-health as the most successful joke subject.

I might fade out this article by mentioning an analysis we made of the replies received by the *Sunday Dispatch* (courtesy of film critic Moore Raymond) in a competition where they asked people to name which "fade-out" of a film they liked best. Usually, press information of this sort is of little value, because those who reply are influenced by what they think the paper will or won't like as indicated by its published attitudes on the subject. In this case there was no attitude or indication of opinion to influence the readers; they simply wrote on postcards their ideas of the perfect ending. The most popular fade-outs were these, in this order of frequency:

Three Comrades. Two of the comrades, already dead, beckon the third to join them. Arm in arm the three comrades march through the skies.

Dark Victory. The heroine walks slowly upstairs to die bravely and alone.

Goodbye Mr. Chips. Mr Chips in his old age murmurs the names of the boys that he has known, as he dies.

Wuthering Heights. The hero climbs the hill, faithful to a tryst with a lover who is dead.

A Tale of Two Cities. Carton says "It is a far, far better thing", etc. The camera pans as the guillotine knife falls, and shows the clear sky. Then a scripture text.

Modern Times. Charlie Chaplin and his girl walk off down the road together.

Queen Christina. The exiled Queen stands at the prow of her ship, like a figure-head, looking into the future.

Lost Horizon. The hero struggles back over the mountains to the dream city of Shangri La.

Here we see down into the heart of stolid, shy, old British emotion. The tragic ending wins every time, provided it looks into the future and brings some message of heroic hope. It is because Winston Churchill feels like the readers of popular Sunday papers that he is able to call out so much in British people that Chamberlain, Halifax, or Attlee could never command.

On the basis of our own experience, plus the existing techniques available from propaganda testing and market research, and the Payne Fund studies, it would seem to be a relatively simple matter to set up an independent bureau, recognised and supported by all the interested parties. This bureau would be concerned entirely with research, establishing and using accurate and agreed criteria, observational, verbal, statistical and qualitative, to measure the effects of all sorts of film, and to predict the needs of existing and potential film audiences. Its job would include:—

1. Keeping a regular check on opinion trends about films in general, different types of film and their prestige in particular.
2. Reporting on public reaction to all relevant films, especially shorts, which are not measurable by any box office index.
3. Discovering what symbols and subjects are suitable or require film treatment at any time. (e.g. At the time of writing Indian troops are a particularly popular symbol not being used on the films; acute boredom is caused by shots of arms workers, the history of the crisis before the outbreak of the war, and the Duchess of Gloucester inspecting things, subjects repeatedly used.)
4. Providing information on the varying situations which produce "undesirable" effects, the general trend of reaction to war themes, etc. (e.g., from September, 1939, to August, 1940, there was a steady 17 per cent disliking all themes connected with the war unless humorously treated, a higher proportion objecting to horror shots of any sort).
5. Producing general factual criticism, from the public opinion point of view, on all propaganda films; and providing comments on the elementary social factors which seemed to have escaped the attention of the industry (e.g. films such as *Call to Arms* and *Mr. Borland Thinks Again* have been generally distributed, though their application was particular. Mr. Borland was concerned mainly with silage, a word that was not explained until the last minute of the film).

POSTSCRIPT ON 5-MINUTE FILMS

FIFTEEN official M.O.I. shorts, and 2 G.P.O. films released through the M.O.I., have been the subject of study. The failure to advertise these official films was found to be a weakness, and lately the failure to show them. For instance, at six out of seven cinemas in Watford, and two out of three in Streatham, recently, the "shorts" could not be seen at all. By the end of August a survey showed that 59 per cent of Londoners had seen and remembered something about Ministry "shorts", and that of these nearly four liked them for every person who disliked them. This is a much higher degree of popularity than that enjoyed by newsreels, but it has not been wholly maintained. There has generally been a much higher degree of popularity and response from middle-class people than from working-class people (sex differences are very slight). This seems to derive largely from the essentially upper and middle-class attitude of many of the films. This started with the original *Careless Talk* films, in each of which the spy was a worker (barman, café proprietress, pub-crawler), while in two of them the gossipers were working class, though in only one was the cast, as a whole, working class. The hero of one of these films, a factory scientist with a beautiful large house is killed by the idiocy of a factory worker. The hero of another is a rich young airman; his fiancée lives in a luxury flat. This tradition has been maintained, though not to the same extent, in the later five-minute "shorts"; Miss Grant and Miss Know-all are ladies with large houses, while the working-class population of *Call to Arms* was really a joke, and repeatedly, where working-class characters are represented favourably, they are not represented faithfully. It is interesting to notice that the most remembered and commented on feature of any film was Priestley's commentary to *Britain at Bay;* he provides a bridge between middle and working classes.

Another factor which seems to have led to the decline in intensity of interest is the lack of continuity or apparent theme-sequence in the films from week to week. Several films were criticised for vagueness, e.g., *Sea Fort*, which was very puzzling; *Call to Arms* and *Yesterday's Over Your Shoulder*, which had direct appeals for service without explaining clearly how or where to offer it. The lack of humour has also been a striking feature of many of the films; only four have made any real attempt to exploit humour, and in two of these mass taste has been considerably misjudged. Finally, the stressing of stars in some of the films has detracted from the feeling of reality upon which the success of such films largely depends; Stanley Holloway, Robertson Hare, Emlyn Williams, Dorothy Hyson, and so on, turn "shorts" into rather vague and incoherent minor-feature films.

If we classify the films into "short stories" and "strict documentaries", and compare the observed audience response of the two main types, we find a consistently higher degree of response to the documentary; approximately one-eighth of response to the documentaries is unfavourable, whereas rather under a half of the response to the story films is unfavourable.

Roughly, this means that bad sequences in short stories really irritate people, while bad sequences in documentaries are not so likely to annoy. But, on the other hand, a short story, which takes into account the other considerations, can be more successful than the documentary in arousing audience interest, and especially personal identification which is associated with probable definite action. The power of a purely documentary film to make people change their habits is doubtful. But here is a subject which vitally requires research. What is the *effect* of an M.O.I. film like *Food for Thought* in terms of actual increased economic cooking and intelligent dieting? This type of effect could easily be tested, and we hope to undertake such tests in the near future, but really it is the job for a special organisation working directly with film interests.

OVERSEAS NOTES

UNITED STATES

One-Tenth of Our Nation, a film on Negro education in the United States, received its premiere on August 21 at the Chicago Negro Exposition. A Film Associates, Inc. production, it was made under a grant of the General Education Board and presented by the American Film Center. The film was shot last spring on locations in the South, and is said by Channing Tobias, chairman of the committee, to be the "first great documentary film on Negro Education". A Roy Harris score built by Negro themes provides the musical background for the Negro commentator, Maurice Ellis.

The idea of the film came from the authorities of the Chicago Exposition. "We wanted to tell the people of the United States something about Negro schools and colleges", Claude Barnett said. "We wanted to show everything from the hungry boys and girls in overcrowded one-room schools to the proud graduates of our great universities. *One-Tenth of Our Nation* tells the story in its economic and social setting and is a success story of Negro and white co-operation even though there still remains plenty to do."

The film was made possible by a gift of the General Education Board to the American Film Center.

By agreement all net earnings from distribution will be paid into a revolving fund which will be used to produce more films about Negroes and education.

One-Tenth of Our Nation will be available in 16 mm. for educational distribution through the American Film Center at the conclusion of its theatrical run.

State Conservation

The Missouri State Conservation Commission places films first among educational media. This opinion was voiced by Commissioner Stevens when, accompanied by Townsend Godsey, Chief of the Division of Education, he visited New York City early in September to view the rough-cut version of *Back to Missouri*, the Commission's first regular wildlife production. Youth group work is a feature of the picture.

The film was produced by Mack Gorham, in association with the American Film Center.

Handicrafts

A series of six new 1-reel instructional films dealing with handicraft arts was announced for release effective September 15 by Garrison Film Distributors, Inc. The films were produced in co-operation with the Universal School of Handicrafts under the supervision of Edward T. Hall, Director of the School. The series is intended for adult and elementary school use. Titles are: (1) *Elementary Manual Training*. (2) *Marionettes, Construction and Manipulation*. (3) *Elementary Bookbinding*. (4) *Loom Weaving*. (5) *Decorative Metal Work*. (6) *Leather Work*. Manuals published by the school are available for use with the films.

Sculpture

Sculpture for Today, a 2-reel motion picture, produced by the Motion Picture Unit of the Photographic Division of the New York W.P.A. Art Project, was announced for release on August 19. The film is described as "a record of the processes by which stone and metal grow under men's hands into works of art, and a commentary on sculpture in its functional aspect."

Civil Service

A film on Civil Service is reported nearing completion for the New York City W.P.A. The picture which will be based on material supplied by Civil Service President Paul Kern. To be released soon to Civil Service groups.

Department of Agriculture

The following films are reported as having been released by the Department of Agriculture during the fiscal year ending June 30, last. They are being distributed by the Agricultural Adjustment Committees in the states concerned.

Four Thousand Gifts of the Forest. Displays, in the guise of a pageant, the wide variety of forest products that contribute to the present-day standard of living.

The Living Land. The land, living or dead, is the heritage of successive generations. This film illustrates the importance of keeping the good land good.

Pork on the Farm. How to grow hogs for home use; how to slaughter, cut, and cure.

Bears in Alaska. A plea for the preservation of Alaska bears. Striking shots of wild Grizzly, Kadiak, and Black bears.

Orchard Mouse Control. Discusses methods of preventing damage caused by meadow and pine mice in orchards. Shows how to control them.

Four Little Mice. Illustrates habits and control of meadow, pine, deer, and house mice.

During the same period the following films were produced in co-operation with State Agricultural Adjustment Committees:

Savings Under Seal (South Dakota). A.A.A. Wheat Loan enables the farmer to store his wheat under seal until market is good.

Wheat on Call (South Dakota). Crop insurance protects the wheat crop in South Dakota.

Maine (A.A.A. Newsreel). The State of Maine participates in the A.A.A. programme. Woodlot improvement, orchard mulching, soil conservation, liming, the use of proper fertilizers.

A.A.A. and Wheat (Nebraska). Through A.A.A. Wheat Loans, Nebraska farmers are enabled to sell as much wheat as the market requires, and store the surplus in country elevators and in bins on farms until it can be sold at a fair price.

Agricultural Wisconsin. Brings out the contribution agriculture has made to the State of Wisconsin and how the future economic life of Wisconsin will depend upon, and be affected by, a national policy for agriculture.

This Land of Ours (Ohio). Shows some of the serious losses that have resulted from unplanned farming operations of the past, and what farmers are doing under a co-operative programme to rebuild and protect the soil resources of Michigan.

JAMAICA

There has recently been a good deal of interest in 16 mm. educational films. The Jamaica Welfare Limited, 24 Duke Street, Kingston, is promoting this type of education. It maintains a selection of films which have been approved by the local Department of Education for the use of schools and institutions. The Jamaica Welfare Limited has three trucks at the present time which it uses for this purpose. The trucks are fully equipped with projector, film, and operators who travel throughout the Island showing educational films, but none of the schools or colleges has its own equipment. There are no 16 mm. sound projectors reported to be in Jamaica.

NIGERIA

Special performances for school children have been screened once a week at the Rex Cinema in Lagos and these have been well attended, the average attendance reaching 400 to 500 per performance. The charge for admission is 1½*d*. The proprietors of the cinema have written for a selection of educational films for use at these performances. It is hoped that this experiment will develop into a useful service, and will be followed up by similar performances in other towns where cinemas have been installed.

Private persons have given a number of exhibitions of their own films in schools and colleges. Such films are usually of local scenes. The Propaganda Unit of the Medical Department with its touring cinema contines to attract large and enthusiastic audiences on its visits to up-country districts.

BRITISH HONDURAS

THERE ARE seven 16 mm. projectors in British Honduras, all silent and privately owned. Schools do not show educational motion pictures. Both secondary and elementary education are wholly denominational, the elementary schools receiving grants-in-aid from the Government.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

London Can Take It. *Production:* G.P.O. Film Unit (M.O.I.). *Direction:* Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings. *Commentary:* Quentin Reynolds. *Camera:* Jonah Jones and Chick Fowle. *Distribution:* U.S.A.

THIS IS a propaganda film. It is also a truthful film. Its major value will be in its showing throughout the American continent, but at the same time it is so accurate in fact and atmosphere that it is bound to have an admirable morale effect on the audiences in this country who see it in its Five-Minute version, *Britain Can Take It*. The version reviewed here is the full reel as sent to the U.S.A.

The film is in the form of a despatch by Quentin Reynolds, war-correspondent to the American journal *Collier's Weekly*, and of course a United States citizen himself. It is a simple statement about an ordinary London night under the aerial blitzkrieg. It begins in early evening and ends in the morning. The shooting is terse and simple in technique. The photography is of the highest quality, with some really remarkable and highly authentic night scenes, not merely of conflagrations, but also of London illumined by the fitful flashes of gunfire and bomb explosions. The sound track, other than the commentary, is composed of the real sounds—sirens, gunfire, bombs falling and all.

It will be seen that, at the least, *London Can Take It* would be an admirable reportage of fact. That it is so much more is due to the way Reynolds' commentary is welded to the picture, and to the sentiments which the commentary expresses (the commentary is published in full on page 6). The style is in the highest tradition of good journalism, while the sentiments stress the absolute and final authority of the people of London as the front-line soldiers of the war, and therefore give the film a democratic validity which is the best possible link between our citizens and the citizens of the new world. The wail of the sirens rings out as a challenge rather than an alarm. And when a sequence of night-raiding ends with the whistle and crash of an H.E. missile, Reynolds' level voice saying "That was a bomb" has a terrific dramatic impact.

The facile and facetious last-war "patriotism" of the newsreels is here shown up for the tosh it is. *London Can Take It* is the first real message from the British people to the American people. And its effect over here will probably be remarkable. To one person at least, previewing the film after a particularly unpleasant night, it had not merely an emotional quality but also the quality of true courage.

It must be added that the production qualities are such that the film shows no sign whatever of the extreme haste with which it was made.

Home Front. (Canada at War series.) *Production:* National Film Board of Canada, *Direction:* Stanley Hawes. *Distribution:* M.O.I. Non-T. 10 minutes.

Letter from Aldershot. (Canada at War series.) *Production:* National Film Board and Realist Film Unit. *Distribution:* M.O.I. Non-T. 10 minutes.

THE FIRST thing one notices about both these films is that the Grierson-Legg-Hawes production technique for Canada is concentrating on speed and zingo. Both the films gallop along at a fine pace, and are really beautifully cut—especially *Letter from Aldershot*. The criticism that they cram too much into a short footage is amply met by the fact that after seeing them one is left with an admirably clear and succinct impression of the information they give.

Home Front covers chiefly the rôle of Canadian women in wartime—including a very impressive female flying instructress. Its technique is roughly that of the *March of Time* except that it moves much quicker. The women of Canada seem to be taking over practically everything, including many high-grade engineering jobs; and the women of Canada are extremely good looking.

Letter from Aldershot was largely shot over here by the Realist Film Unit; the material was, however, cut in Canada, and a preliminary sequence added showing the departure of the Canadian forces. The commentary of this film is what the title implies—an intimate message to Canada from the boys over in England. There are also a number of direct synchronous sequences, including a series of personal messages spoken straight into the camera by Canadians in England. The film has a very moving human quality, and some of the cutting, particularly that of Canadian Scottish on the march, has qualities which some of us over here would do well to remember.

Speed Up and Welfare. *Associate Producer:* Arthur Elton. *Production:* Strand. *Director:* Edgar Anstey. *Distribution:* M.O.I. Non-T. 10 minutes.

THIS IS something real and sensible and vigorous. It is about workers in an aircraft factory, and shows how they organise their defence and their welfare within the framework set up by the various Ministries. The subject is seen clearly and sensibly and is free of the all-too-frequent patronage which creeps in when the operation of Governmental measures for welfare is concerned.

The film points out that the hands, the bodies and the lives of the workers are more precious than ever before, and then firmly switches its viewpoint to that of the workers themselves, from whose point of view the story is largely told ("the best judge of industrial fatigue is the worker himself"). There is a fine sequence showing how the factory could turn into an armed fortress at a moment's notice (the people's army springs to life), and the whole film is presented with neatness, skill, and a real understanding of the fundamental decencies. Altogether this is is one of the best and the most enjoyable of the Film Division's non-theatricals.

It Comes from Coal. *Production:* Realist Film Unit, for the Gas Industry. *Producer:* Edgar Anstey. *Director:* Paul Fletcher. *Distribution:* M.O.I. Non.T. 10 minutes.

A TEN-MINUTE essay on the applications of coal derivatives does not sound a promising subject for a film. Yet *It Comes from Coal* is just that—a tight, succinct essay, neatly constructed, easy to look at and easy to recollect. Anstey, more than any other producer, has the ability to take dry and abstract subjects relating to economics, nutrition and the so-called social sciences, and to put them vividly on the screen. His first film of this kind was *The Nutrition Film*. To his feeling for clear and human exposition displayed in that film, he has been able to add a directness of expression learned when he was British producer for *The March of Time*. The result has been that Anstey has developed a special style of his own. If one saw *It Comes from Coal* without the commentary, the effect would be baffling; the commentary alone might be flat and dull. Together they blend perfectly and the final result is a logical structure in purely film terms, neither an illustrated commentary, nor a commentary hanging precariously on a series of moving lantern-slide film shots.

It Comes from Coal leads us gently from facts about coal itself, to the chemical industry which uses it as a raw material from which to extract or synthesise benzol and plastics, dyestuffs and drugs. At the end, one feels that one has been through a lesson, but a lesson so neatly put across, so full of easily assimilable facts, so rounded and clear that one is sorry when it is over.

Welfare of the Workers. *Production:* G.P.O. Film Unit (M.O.I.). *Director:* Humphrey Jennings.

THIS FILM is primarily designed to encourage industrial workers with news of what the Ministry of Labour is doing to safeguard working conditions in war-time. The film is also calculated, with its enthusiastic account of the provisions made for the comfort of trainees, to aid industrial recruitment. The general emphasis is thrown on welfare outside the factories such as the arrangements made to provide good living and recreation for workers transferred from their homes to new jobs

among strangers. The commentator tells us that the Government has decided that factory efficiency and output do not ultimately benefit from abnormally long hours, and that pre-war factory acts and welfare regulations are now to be reinforced. We are shown some of the new wartime responsibilities of the factory inspector and some of the measures being taken to ameliorate the effects of work under war conditions—for example, the introduction of improved lighting which helps to relieve the strain of night-shift work. (It is a pity that with the presumable intention of achieving a particular æsthetic effect—in any case inappropriate to the subject—the factory interiors are consistently photographed as if they were dungeons.)

Welfare of the Workers is somewhat scrappy and shapeless but its principal fault lies in the patronising attitude which it takes towards the workers (simple, child-like folk), and in its representation of the Ministry of Labour, not as a body of public servants, but as a father from whom all blessings flow. The film concludes with familiar newsreel shots of Mr Bevin at a factory concert.

Fighters of the Veldt. *Production:* (South Africa). *Distribution:* M.O.I. Non-T. 30 minutes. THIS rather drab tattoo of South Africa's war effort has a commentary of rare banality ("At the training camp the soldiers detrain"—work it out for yourself). Almost everything is shown that could be shown with the exception (*a*) of what sort of people the South African forces consist; (*b*) negroes, and (*c*) General Hertzog.

Transfer of Skill. *Production:* Shell Film Unit. *Producer:* Arthur Elton. *Direction:* Geoffrey Bell. *Distribution:* M.O.I. Non-T. 10 minutes.

Transfer of Skill combines the lucid exposition of mechanical method, upon which the Shell Unit has built its reputation, with the lighter style and the more personalised subjects of the Unit's *Cinemagazines*. The purpose of the film is to show how a variety of British craftsmen have found war-work which utilises their peace-time skill. The watchmaker is ideally qualified to make timing gear for shells, the jeweller's engraver makes navigation instruments, and the man whose hobby it was in peace-time to make model engines, finds that he too can make a contribution to the war effort.

Transfer of Skill selects four or five examples and compares the peace-time job with the war job. There is considerable attention to the detail of the work which is often analysed in beautiful close-ups. If the peace-time job sometimes proves the more interesting and claims longer footage, this is a propaganda fault inherent in the subject and not in its treatment. But not every episode makes us sigh for the return of the pre-war crafts. It is alarming to discover how much human ingenuity used once to be devoted to the production of expensive jewellery. A more personal treatment of the workers themselves, and some information on how the change-over of jobs came about would have been welcome, but this is a one-reel film and material remains for another.

Gateways to Panama. *Production:* March of Time (No. 5, Sixth Year). *Distribution:* R.K.O. Radio Pictures. Two reels.

A MAJOR issue of American military strategy is to protect the maritime approaches to the Panama Canal. These approaches are besprinkled with the islands of the Dutch, French and British West Indies. *Gateways to Panama* attempts to explain the politico-military situation of these islands and makes it apparent that, in this corner of the globe, European problems are also America's. Apart from political and military considerations the film achieves significance in a particular respect. It devotes a long sequence to a damning exposé of the conditions in French Guiana and upon Devil's Island. This sequence is deeply disturbing to witness for it records a human cancer which mocks France and indeed, all civilisation.

Within the penal area annual mortality is 20%. When working in the forests a man's chance of survival is evens. This is without the assistance of the guillotine which, if one's eyes see aright, is depicted with its decapitated output stacked like faggots against a wall.

Survival itself means year upon year lived under a ghastly tyranny of official graft and vengeance. It can therefore be understood why revolution smoulders and why the humans in the scenes are as camera conscious as wolves. General problems of penal reform might appear to be of secondary importance in war time; but are they? A March of Time not to be missed.

Appreciation of our regular feature on Documentary Films appearing in the

"KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY"

The Leading Journal of the Film Industry

Ministry of Information,
Malet Street,
London, W.C.1.
August 5th, 1940.

DEAR MR RAYMENT,

Thank you for your letter of August 2nd. I found your supplement most interesting, and I look forward to your next month's issue.

Yours truly,
JACK BEDDINGTON.

August 5th, 1940.

DEAR MR RAYMENT,

Thank you very much for your letter of August 2nd, and the copy of the special supplement to the *Kinematograph Weekly* which you enclose.

I have studied it with great interest, and it seems to me to have a news and propaganda value of the highest quality. With many thanks,

Believe me, Yours very sincerely,
J. H. BEITH,
Major-General,
Director of Public Relations.

From LORD STRABOLGI,
Iddesleigh House,
Caxton Street,
Westminster, S.W.1.
August 3rd, 1940.

DEAR SIR,

I am obliged to you for sending me a copy of your new special supplement of Propaganda and Documentary Films.

I consider this an excellent idea, and it should prove most valuable.

Yours faithfully,
STRABOLGI.

Published every Thursday

Kinematograph WEEKLY

85 Long Acre London, WC2

THE FILM STRIP IN EDUCATION

By W. E. TATE, Headmaster of Sneyd School, BURSLEM

I TAKE it that in accepting the editor's invitation to contribute to the *Documentary News Letter* a brief note upon the use of film strips in school work, I need hardly begin by defining the film strip. Perhaps it is sufficient here to say that it consists essentially of a series of say 20-70 lantern slide pictures with suitable text and captions printed, not like ordinary lantern slides upon glass, but upon a strip of cinema film. For educational use the film strip has in its cheapness and convenience enormous advantages over the old-fashioned lantern slide. I fancy too that, despite its modest cost and the simplicity of its use, it has some considerable advantages (though, of course, with many evident counter-availing disadvantages) over the cinema sound or silent film.

For the cost of a couple of lantern slides one may purchase a film strip having five or six dozen still pictures. The storage of a reasonable stock of school lantern slides (say four or five thousand glass slides), requires a fair-sized cabinet, while film strips containing twice as many individual pictures (though costing only about a twelfth of the price), will go in a single foolscap filing drawer. Moreover slides have a knack of suffering badly both in use and in storage (the useful and interesting ones always seem to be getting broken, or having their cover glasses cracked), while, so far as my experience goes, film strips, if one takes even reasonable care of them, last quite as long as one can fairly expect. And when they do ultimately expire of old age and scratches, the cost of renewal is so modest that even a poor school like my own has no difficulty in replacing them. Probably the one of ours which will need such renewal first is *Cinderella*, and if, after giving the youngsters pleasure for five or six years, it costs us half a crown for replacement, we shall feel that we have had very good value for our money.

In exhibition, too, the film strip is simplicity itself. A ten-year-old youngster may safely be trusted with the lantern and its management. It just *can't* go wrong; there is no complicated mechanism to puzzle the amateur, and to introduce difficulties. As such an amateur, not at all mechanically minded, I have examined the inside working of our lantern. So far as I can see it consists simply of a light-tight box, a projection lens with a simple rack-and-pinion focussing adjustment, a lamp holder for a 10-watt bulb, with a couple of switches, and an adaptor to fit into the school lighting circuit through a suitable transformer. Inside the box are a couple of spindles to hold the reels of film strip, and these are worked by means of milled heads projecting through the side of the lantern. I should think that a well-equipped senior school, with a proper workshop, ought to be able to make a very useful lantern for a pound or thirty shillings.

I find I have omitted to mention the greatest advantage of all of the film strip lantern compared with the miniature cinema, though, of course, one it shares with the old-fashioned lecture lantern. The picture appears upon the screen for just as long as the teacher and class want it there—a single second, or five minutes. If one wishes to refer during the lecturette to a picture already shown, one merely turns the milled heads backwards instead of forwards until the desired picture appears, then reverses the process and continues the display from where one has broken off. The reader who has had experience of asking his lanternist, without any preliminary warning, to go through his slides, and redisplay say one shown five or ten minutes before, will appreciate the convenience of this last-mentioned feature. Still another point, very important to those who are considering the use of optical aids in *teaching*, rather than of picture display as a sort of cross between teaching and entertainment, is that in using the film strip lantern one can make one's own commentary in accordance with the needs of the class; and one is not faced with the alternative either of switching off a sound track (rather to the disappointment of one's audience), or of putting on a commentary which is perhaps largely irrelevant or which, when the same film is used for audiences of widely differing ages and capacities, must necessarily be over the heads of the backward classes, or beneath the capacities of the more advanced ones.

Now for the practical details: Our lantern cost us less than £5 (we are a slum school, with very little money, and with little prospect of obtaining outside aid for the purchase of expensive gadgets). Had we bought it new it would have cost £7. 8*s*. 6*d*., and other models are obtainable at prices ranging from £4. 10*s*. to £16. 16*s*. Such lanterns are suitable for illustrating lectures to audiences up to but not much more than 200 or so. Since the wattage of the bulb is relatively low (and the lamps are correspondingly cheap), the room in which the lantern is used should be well

SIGHT AND SOUND

ORKO

AUTUMN 1940 SIXPENCE

blacked out, though fairly good pictures for a small audience may be obtained in a half-light. The screen need not necessarily be an expensive one. We obtain excellent results on a wall colour-washed pale yellow, though still better ones on an ordinary school blackboard which has had one or two coats of "flat-white" paint, and a finishing coat of ivory enamel. We are fortunate in having a spare classroom. Here the blackboard is now a whiteboard, the teacher's desk is screwed down to the floor at a suitable distance from the screen, and the spare films and other fittings are stored in a cabinet (a very small one is quite large enough) in a corner of the room. The seating accommodation consists of a few of the old-fashioned long desks, given to us by a very generous and helpful L.E.A. which has watched our experiment with benevolent interest. The room is by no means palatial, but it is entirely adequate, and the children's appreciation of the facilities provided for them is very evident.

We have experimented with film strip illustration of various lessons. With history and geography, and to a less extent with nature study and Scripture, the apparatus has been a godsend. In one or two other subjects it has not proved so successful. In literature, we found that display of the pictures tended rather to divert attention from the text than to illuminate it. But with the three "oral" subjects above mentioned the method has proved in practice to be almost ideal. We have found also an admirable series of Scripture strips, perfectly adapted to the use of young children who cannot possibly use a school Bible (almost invariably the worst printed, bound and illustrated book one finds in any school), and who would probably gain very little from it if they could. The babies too have a small but growing collection of strips illustrating nursery rhymes and fairy tales, with a few line pictures, and simple captions in plain black capitals. (The fact that such captions are generally printed from positives done on a typewriter makes it quite easy for infant and sub-normal children to make out the general gist of the wording. In fact the typewriter type is so plain and legible that we are hoping in the next session to try further experiments in the use of such captions in teaching reading to young and backward children, the captions being the main object of study, and the pictures being used as jam round the pill). It is a delightful experience to give the youngest children an occasional unexpected show, and to see and hear their frantic enthusiasm over *The Prodigal Son*, *The Three Bears*, or *A Visit to the Zoo*. At first we fancied that the children might prove hypercritical, and compare adversely our modest efforts in picture production with the product of the elaborate apparatus in the local cinemas. We find, however, that since the lantern does not pretend to be a cinema, and is clearly an instrument on its own, not merely a cheap substitute for something else, this difficulty has not arisen. (Not but what we should be very glad to have a film projector too, if we could afford one, though even if we had, its function would be quite different from that of the lantern now being described.)

With the older children (though our school is merely "Infants and Juniors", so that we lose our youngsters before they are twelve) we are finding it possible gradually to encourage the children themselves to give simple lecturettes, having looked out the matter beforehand and used the school reference books to clear up points upon which they are rather hazy. Still another advantage of the film strip which we have found in practice in this matter of lecturing is that the captions serve as lecture notes if the film strip is a really well-planned one, so that even the most woolly-headed lecturer finds it possible to keep to the point, without having constantly to interrupt his discourse to turn up his lecture notes.

As against all these advantages the main disadvantage of the film strip (apart of course from the fact that the pictures are "stills," not "living"), is that unless one is wealthy enough to have one's strip specially made, one has to take a ready-made series, some of the items in which will probably not be exactly what is wanted. This, however, can be met in a manner indicated below. And, naturally, for addressing really large-audiences, the quality of the picture given by a film strip can never approach that of the large-scale cinematograph machine or that of the lecture lantern. Even so it is much better than that obtainable from most commercial episcopes, though not, of course, comparable with that to be had from a really good diascope. But in any case, even in wartime conditions few classes, we hope, are likely to exceed a couple of hundred in number, so the disadvantage is rather apparent than real.

So far as we have been able to ascertain there are several German and American concerns manufacturing film strips commercially. We believe there are but three English ones—Messrs. Newton of Wigmore Street, Messrs. Cinescopic Instruments & Services Ltd., of Paternoster Row (whose catalogue seems to be word for word identical with that of Messrs. Newton), and Messrs. the Visual Information Service, of Battersea Bridge Road. Each of these firms issues a catalogue, and with a little ingenuity it is possible to build up from these at a very modest cost a stock of film strips which will suffice to illustrate all the ordinary lessons in a primary school, unless its syllabuses be quite unusual in their range. Schools better circumstanced than ourselves may perhaps care to have their film strips specially made at a cost of threepence a picture! We have found the ready-made films at a penny a picture quite satisfactory. After all, every school in the country which teaches history will somewhere or other in its syllabus include the Norman Conquest, so a ready-made strip of the Bayeux Tapestry cannot fail to be useful: similarly every school doing world geography cannot but mention the hot deserts, so will be able to use a strip on the Sahara, and every school having nature study lessons must surely somewhere or other have a series of lessons on the wild animals of our own country. Strips—ready made and therefore cheap—on these and a variety of other similar subjects are to be readily obtained.

In history especially a tremendous range of strips is available. Messrs. V.I.S. cover in great detail the ordinary range of school history lessons up to say A. D. 1600. They have also an admirable series of social history films, based upon Hartley and Elliot's work, and an exceptionally well-designed series upon the Industrial Revolution, evidently planned by someone who is not only a competent historian, but also a skilled teacher. Messrs. C.I.S. and Newton have several excellent series upon technical and geographical subjects. Messrs. Newton, particularly, have reproduced in film strip form many of the sets of illustrations originally prepared for glass slides, and issue these complete with lecture notes in print. Messrs. V.I.S. on the other hand, have generally followed the plan of including on the strip itself at any rate an outline of the matter to be dealt with by the lecturer. There are evident advantages in either method, and the reader may well be left to take his choice. Both Messrs. Newton and Messrs. V.I.S. will supply at a very modest cost their standard strips with the omission, insertion or substitution of specified pictures in the ready made article. Coloured film strips cost about 2½*d.* a picture extra.

A number of religious and political organisations have issued film strips for propagandist purposes, usually some years ago before the commercial cinema was so highly developed as it is now. Prominent among these are the League of Nations Union, which has two or three excellent strips, and the Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, which has issued a strip entitled *A Day in the Life of an M.P.* Despite the obvious danger of introducing anything even remotely savouring of party propaganda into the schools which belong to us all, I think this strip is well worth a place in any school collection. The parties of the Left have made much more use of the film strip. The Co-operative Union has a series of five or six strips, some of which are very good indeed, concerning the social history of the early nineteenth century, and that most energetic body, the National Council of Labour Colleges (N.C.L.C.), has had produced for it by Messrs. V.I.S. several well-thought-out strips upon foreign policy, colonial issues, social history, etc. These have their value still further increased (or utterly destroyed, according to one's point of view) by a highly Marxian commentary. They are mentioned here as perhaps the best film strips available from the standpoint of technical quality. The recent issue by N.C.L.C. in its series, of the whole of the illustrations in H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* was an excellent piece of work, and it is to be regretted that the other major working-class educational organisation, the W.E.A. has not produced for its students strips equally well done, but without the rather tendentious captions which make it quite impossible to use the N.C.L.C. films in general school work. Probably its principal contribution to film-strip work has been in the films made to the order of individual members and friends in the Departments of Adult Education in various Universities and University Colleges. But this article is supposed to be concerned with the use of the film strip in the education of children of school age, so I had better reserve for future treatment the equally important question of the use of the film strip in adult education.

FILM LIBRARIES

Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternate booking dates, and to return the films immediately after use. H. A hire charge is made. F. Free distribution. Sd. Sound. St. Silent.

Association of Scientific Workers, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films*. A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. On request, Committee will give advice on programme make-up and choice of films.

Austin Film Library. 24 films of motoring interest, industrial, technical and travel. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau*, Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Australian Trade Publicity Film Library. 18 films of Australian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F. 3, sound films on 9.5 mm. available from *Pathescope*.

British Commercial Gas Association, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & a few St. F.

British Council Film Department, 25 Saville Row, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1940. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses of 100 sound and silent documentary films.

British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, W.C.1. (*a*) *National Film Library*. An important collection of documentary and other films. Available only to full members of B.F.I. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H. (*b*) *Some British and Foreign Documentary and other Short Films*. A general list of films and sources. (*c*) *Early Films*. Films 1896–1934 still available in Britain.

British Instructional Films, 111 Wardour Street, W.1. Feature films; Pathé Gazettes and Pathetones; a good collection of nature films. A new catalogue is in preparation. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Canadian Pacific Film Library. 15 films of Canadian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity. A wide variety of films listed in the *Empire Film Library*.

Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Has absorbed the *Empire Film Library* and the *G.P.O. Film Library*. Also contains all new M.O.I. non-theatrical films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Coal Utilisation Joint Council, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Crookes' Laboratories, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. *Colloids in Medicine*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Dartington Hall Film Unit, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

Dominion of New Zealand Film Library. 415 Strand, W.C.2. 22 films of industry, scenery and sport. Includes several films about the Maoris. 16 mm. St. F.

Educational Films Bureau, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Educational General Services, 37 Golden Square, W.1. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. & St. H.

Electrical Development Association, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. Further films of direct advertising appeal are available to members of the Association only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Empire Film Library. Films primarily of Empire interest, with a useful subject index. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. and a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Ensign Film Library, 88–89 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Wide selection of all types of films including fiction, comedies, documentaries, films of geography, animal life, industry. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. & a few Sd. H.

Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, W.1. *Mouvements Vibratoires*. A film on simple harmonic motion. French captions. 35 mm. & 16 mm. St. H.

Ford Film Library, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Gaumont-British Equipments, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Also feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

G.P.O. Film Library. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. F.

Kodak, Ltd., Kingsway, W.C.2. (*a*) *Kodascope Library*. Instructional, documentary, feature, western, comedy. Strong on early American comedies. 16 mm. & 8 mm. St. H. (A separate *List of Educational Films*, extracted from the above, is also published. A number of films have teaching notes.) (*b*) *Medical Film Library*. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

March of Time, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* items, including *Inside Nazi Germany*, *New Schools for Old*, *America Thinks it Over*. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Mathematical Films. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. St. H.

Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester 17. *Planned Electrification*, a film on the electrification of the winding and surface gear in a coal mine. Available for showing to technical and educational groups. 16 mm. Sd. F.

Ministry of Food Film Library, Neville House, Page Street, S.W,1, or from District Officers. 23 films mostly on cooking, nutrition and kindred subjects. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Pathescope, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, W.1. Some 25 technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Religious Film Library, 104 High Holborn, W.C.1. Films of religious and temperance appeal, also list of supporting films from other sources. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Scottish Central Film Library, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere. Library available to groups in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Sound-Film Services, 27 Charles Street, Cardiff. Library of selected films including Massingham's *And So to Work*. *Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. 16 mm. Sd. H.

South African Railways Publicity and Travel Bureau, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2. 10 films of travel and general interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & 4 St. versions. F.

Southern Railway, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

Strand Film Company, 5A Upper St. Martin's Lane, W.C.2. Eleven films available for non-theatrical distribution including *Aerial Milestones*, *Chapter and Verse*, *Give the Kids a Break*, and a number of others of Empire and general interest, including 3 silent Airways films. Mostly 35 mm. Sd. A few 16 mm. St. F.

Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts, 9.5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Workers' Film Association, 145 Wardour Street, W1. Films of democratic and co-operative interest. Notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Some prints for sale. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

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